IRISH 1798 COLLECTION
29

A LETTER

ON THE

PRESENT SITUATION

OF

PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

BY SIR RICHARD MUSGRAVE, BART.
MEMBER OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT.

DEDICATED TO

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF PORTLAND.

Take but degree away, untune that ſtring,
And hark what diſcord follows; each thing meets
In meer oppugnancy; the bounded waters
Would lift their boſoms higher than the ſhores,
And make a ſop of all this ſolid globe;
Strength would be lord of imbecility,
And the rude ſon would ſtrike his father dead:
Force would be right, or rather right and wrong,
Between whoſe endleſs jar Juſtice preſides,
Would loſe their name, and ſo would Juſtice too.

SHAKSPEARE.

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TO

HIS GRACE

THE

DUKE OF PORTLAND.

My Lord Duke,

ANIMATED by the bright example of your Grace, who has ſo nobly and diſintereſtedly come forward in defence of the empire at a time of emergency, I have made a feeble effort (in theſe few ſheets which I take the liberty of dedicating to you) to diſpel thoſe errors which have been maliciouſly diſſeminated to create popular diſcontent. Your Grace's public and private virtues are ſo univerſally known and acknowledged, that no perſon can accuſe me of flattery when I ſay that there is a ſtriking reſemblance between your character and that of Ariſtides; for as he was reputed the moſt upright perſon in Greece, your Grace is confeſſedly ſuch in England, and, like him, you have warmly eſpouſed the cauſe of your country, when its exiſtence was threatened

by a barbarous foreign enemy; having with true patriotiſm ſacrificed, for the public good, all former jealouſies and reſentments, from whatever cauſes they might have ariſen, or however juſtly they might have been grounded.

The confidence which the Public have of your integrity is ſo great, that they are now perſuaded, that every meaſure adopted in the Cabinet will be grounded on the juſteſt principles, by which the efforts of all orders will be united for general preſervation.

I have the honour to be,

With the moſt profound reſpect,

Your Grace's moſt obedient,

Humble ſervant,

RICHARD MUSGRAVE.

November, 1794.

A

LETTER

ON THE

PRESENT SITUATION

OF

PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

DEAR SIR,

WHEN you were recently in this kingdom, I had the pleaſure of converſing with you on the policy of engaging in and of continuing the preſent war, on the origin of the elective franchiſe, the alteration it has undergone in point of value, and the probable conſequences likely to ariſe from extending it to a larger portion of the people, and on the ſtate of our conſtitution before the reign of Charles the Firſt, and the improvements which it has gradually received ſince then; but as your ſtay here was too ſhort to afford me an opportunity of giving you my ſentiments on theſe ſubjects at large, I propoſe to do ſo in the following pages.

If we conſider diſpaſſionately the arguments of thoſe who contend that we ſhould have remained in a ſtate of neutrality towards the French, or that we ſhould now make peace with them, we ſhall

ſhall have reaſon to conclude that they are the ebullitions of party ſpirit and diſappointed ambition, which will ever *ſtrive to make the worſe appear the better reaſon.*

If France, when even under a fixed government, had made any preparations for war, an Engliſh Miniſter who did not immediately put Great Britain in a ſtate of defence, would deſerve to be impeached; now the French not only prepared a formidable armament by ſea and land, but they avowed, in their National Convention, a reſolution to overturn all the governments in Europe, and to eſtabliſh their own ſyſtem of anarchy in their ſtead. Many of their writers, particularly Briſſot, Camille Deſmoulins, and Tom Paine, declared this in their publications; and the latter aſſerted, in the moſt unequivocal terms, that it was eſſential to the permanence of their Republic.

The Engliſh Miniſter would have been guilty of the moſt criminal neglect, if he entertained a doubt of their intentions, when Jean de Brie made a motion in their Pandemonium, to ſend forth 1200 aſſaſſins, to murder all the kings in Europe, and when they made a wanton aggreſſion on our ally the Dutch. They beheld with malignant envy the ſtrength, ſplendor, and opulence of Great Britain, and they knew that they could not hope to accompliſh their infernal ſcheme, unleſs they firſt laid her proſtrate; becauſe ſhe could not, conſiſtent with her honour or her intereſt, ſuffer thoſe inhuman robbers to over-run and plunder the nations with whom ſhe had formed alliances and commercial connections: they, therefore, ſent emiſſaries into England, well ſupplied with money, to introduce that ſyſtem into it by which they ſubverted all ſocial order in their own country: they formed Jacobin ſocieties,

which

which correſponded with ſimilar ones in France, aſſimilated to them in every reſpect, correſponded with them, and promiſed to co-operate with them in introducing French liberty when matters were ripe for that purpoſe; they even made a conſiderable progreſs, through Engliſh agents, in poiſoning the minds of the populace, to whom they gave feaſts and revels, where they drank gratis large potations of porter and gin, to the cauſe of French liberty and equality; and they taught them to believe that a golden age was near, when there would be no more rents or taxes paid, and when they, like their neighbours in France, may exerciſe unbounded rapine with impunity on the honeſt accumulations of induſtry. The Engliſh Jacobin clubs multiplied to ſuch a degree in every part of England, Ireland, and Scotland, were linked together by ſo well connected a chain, and had diffuſed ſo widely their phlogiſtic principles, that they could ſuddenly have conveyed an electric ſhock through the whole empire, which would in an inſtant have overturned the government, as it did in France; for they worked as ſilently as moles, and would have ſtarted up with the fierceneſs of tigers. The Abbe Baruelle, in his account of the maſſacre of the French clergy, obſerves, "Thoſe who blame the French "nobility for not remaining in France to ſup-"port the throne, are little acquainted with the "French Revolution, or the means by which it "was originally conducted; the conſpirators had "artfully concealed their deſigns; on a ſignal "given the 14th of July, by the leaders at Paris, "all the provincial conventicles ſtarted into "light.* The infernal machinations of theſe clubbiſts

* The rapid and direful progreſs which the riot in 1782 made in a few days, though it was not planned with deliberation, ſhews with what gigantic ſtrides ſedition can advance.

clubbiſts were diſcovered, not only by their reſolutions and their correſpondence with their brethren in France, which they continued till the year 1794, but they had even begun to prepare pikes, the inſtruments of carnage. After the French had given ſuch baſe indications of hoſtility, and even after they had murdered their King, they had the folly and temerity of attempting ſo far to impoſe on the credulity of our Miniſters as to propoſe terms of neutrality. Had England been lulled into a ſtate of indolent ſecurity, by continuing neuter, while treaſon, in grim repoſe, was brooding in her boſom, her rebellious ſubjects would have continued to increaſe their friends, and to diſſeminate their volcanic principles, till they had made an exploſion; and they would have been ſeconded by the French, who would have been armed, while we were in a defenceleſs ſtate: thus we ſhould have had a foreign and inteſtine war to encounter at the ſame time.

Private aſſociations, if peaceably conducted, are not illegal. The Commons reſolved, in 1695, that whoever ſhould affirm an aſſociation was illegal, ſhould be deemed a promoter of the deſigns of James the Second, and an enemy to the laws and liberties of the kingdom; and the Riot Act, which paſſed in the year 1715, does not contravene private aſſociations, provided they are carried on in a peaceable manner: but when war was declared, it was high treaſon to communicate or hold any council with the French; and this neſt of vipers could not correſpond with them, or carry on their infernal deſigns, without endangering their lives and the confiſcation of their property. We may deduce, from the condition in life of the majority of thoſe who have

have been detected, that they had but little to lose, and that their main object was to plunder wealth and degrade greatness.

The words of Cicero to the Cataline conspirators at Rome should convey a salutary admonition to such traitors, and teach them that they could not have enjoyed the fruits of their plunder for any time.

" But, suppose they had obtained what they " fought with so much ardour, could they hope " that they would be Consuls, Dictators, or " Kings, in the midst of the conflagration of the " city and the carnage of their fellow-citizens, " which they endeavoured to effect with nefa- " rious and malignant designs? Do they not " perceive that what they thirst for would be en- " joyed by some vagabond or gladiator."*

The chaotic state of France, where both power and property are constantly shifting from one hand to another, should be a sufficient warning to check them in their predatory views. The preservation of the nation may be in a great measure imputed to the wise and benevolent Mr. Burke, who early rung the alarm-bell, and secured us from the infection of deleterious French principles. His book on French affairs contains more political wisdom and more profound knowledge of practical government than any that ever appeared, and in future ages it will tend to endear the British constitution to the subjects of it. The bright effulgence of his genius, like the sun, raised up some buzzing insects, who cavilled at

 the

* Quod si jam sint id quod cum summo furore concupiunt adepti, num illi in cinere urbis et sanguine civium quæ mente conscelerata ac nefaria concupierunt se consules dictatores aut etiam reges futuros? Non vident id se cupere, quod si adepti fuerint fugitivo alicui aut gladiatori concedi sit necesse. *Oratio Secunda contra Catalinam.*

the doctrines which he advanced; but the ſtate of France proves the futility of their aſſertions, and that he ſpoke prophetic truth. His long and luminous life, devoted to the cauſe of wiſdom and virtue, is more bright in its ſetting than the meridian blaze of moſt other geniuſes. England had many other ſtrong motives for declining a neutrality beſides defending her Ally from an unprovoked attack, and ſtifling this rebellion, which threatened her exiſtence. I have obſerved that France had given unqueſtionable proofs of her hoſtile views towards England: let us now examine the many collateral circumſtances which ſhould at this time render her an object of alarm to our Miniſters. Her kingdom is compact; it contains little ſhort of one fourth of the population of Europe; it navigates three ſeas; ſhe had a powerful navy and a formidable army; rich and extenſive colonies; ſhe was warlike and well ſkilled in tactics; and ſhe avowedly aſpired to univerſal conqueſt. But what heightened all theſe advantages was, that her ſubjects, releaſed from every religious and moral tie, were animated by an enthuſiaſm which no other nation ever experienced. When the rival of England was thus circumſtanced, it was the moſt conſummate wiſdom in her Miniſters to declare war, and what has happened, proves that France would have eaſily conquered moſt of the ſtates on the European Continent, if our Adminiſtration had not checked them in their ambitious career. Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, all the powers in the Adriatic and Archipelago, and probably on the Dardanelles, the Marmora, the Boſphorus, and Black Sea, would have been ſubdued by her.* It is obvious,

* This idea cannot appear extravagant, if we conſider that the little Republic of Genoa had very large poſſeſſions in Greece, the Archipelago, and the Black Sea.

obvious, from what has occurred, that Spain, the only conſiderable naval power in the Mediterranean, could not have ſucceſsfully oppoſed her; nay, that kingdom, unaſſiſted by England, would have been eaſily ravaged by her. Moſt of the German ſtates and Holland muſt have fallen a prey to her. When ſhe had advanced ſo far in her victorious progreſs, Sweden and Denmark could have made but a feeble reſiſtance to her. Could England, conſiſtent with common policy, continue a tame ſpectator, while thoſe countries, whoſe commercial connections with her are the ſource of her preſent proſperity, were reduced to deſolation? She is as much intereſted in maintaining the rights of ſuch nations, with whom ſhe carries on an extenſive and beneficial trade, as thoſe of her own colonies. The caſe of America proves this in the cleareſt manner. While ſubject to England, ſhe was at a monſtrous expence in protecting her during war, and in time of peace in maintaining a military and civil eſtabliſhment there, and in giving a bounty on every article of American produce imported into England; ſhe is now exonerated from this heavy expenſe, and ſtill carries on a very advantageous trade with America. Many perſons, from a want of information on this ſubject are apt to raiſe a murmur of diſcontent againſt our Miniſters for having originally embarked in the war, and now for continuing it; I would recommend to ſuch perſons to ſee, in Anderſon's Hiſtory of Commerce, or even in Guthrie's Geography, the ſtate of our exports and imports to and from the countries which I have mentioned, and the balance of trade in favour of England, and they will agree with me that it would be highly criminal in Adminiſtration to ſuffer the French to ravage them, and to introduce into them that

anarchy which they have eſtabliſhed in their own. To what purpoſe then, would England ſend to their ports the immenſe quantities of her manufactures which ſhe does at preſent? Her commerce would have been deſtroyed, and of courſe her revenue, and then the proprietors of the funds would look in vain for their intereſt, public credit would be ruined, and with the deſtruction of our trade our navy would be annihilated. England, then, is not idly or wantonly fighting for foreign nations; ſhe is contending for that wealth and proſperity which ſhe now enjoys—nay, for her very exiſtence. When the French were enriched by the plunder of ſuch extenſive and wealthy ſtates, when they had a great navy and a numerous army fluſhed with victory, which would have increaſed their enthuſiaſm, could England, poor ſolitary England, unarmed, without an ally, and hatching treaſon in her bowels, have been able to reſiſt? No; it would have been impoſſible; and England, fair England,

> This royal throne of kings, this ſcepter'd iſle,
> This earth of majeſty, this ſeat of Mars,
> This other Eden, demy paradiſe;
> This fortreſs built by nature for herſelf
> Againſt infection and the hand of war;
> This happy breed of men, this little world,
> This precious ſtone, ſet in the ſilver ſea,
> Which ſerves it in the office of a wall;
> Or as a moat defenſive to a houſe,
> Againſt the envy of leſs happy lands,
>
> SHAKESPEARE, Richard II.

Muſt have fallen, and not to a generous enemy, but to a horde of robbers, more fierce and cruel than the Saracens, the Tartars, or the Turks. If we were inclined to peace, with whom could we make it? Is it with the National Convention, bathed in blood, whoſe proceedings are delirious; who,

who, after having murdered their King, have attempted to dethrone their God; who have denounced vengeance againſt all European nations, and whoſe government is ſo uncertain and variable, that it may be compared to the ſhiftings of a pantomime?

> Fiet enim ſubito ſus horridus atraque tigris,
> Squamoſuſque draco et fulva cervice leæna,
> Omnia transformat ſeſe in miracula rerum.

The Girondine party have been ejected, and murdered by the Mountain; a faction raiſed by the gold of that deſperate ruffian Egalite, who headed it for ſome time, but was at laſt brought to condign puniſhment by his fellow aſſaſſins. His ſucceſſor, Robeſpierre, fell a ſacrifice to his ambition, when, after wading through blood, he had almoſt attained the higheſt pinnacle of it. The Convention is at this moment in a ſtate of fermentation, and as the two parties are nearly balanced, it is certain that a ſtruggle for pre-eminence will end in a bloody conflict. I ſhould wiſh to be informed, by thoſe who are advocates for peace, how Adminiſtration can weigh the ſtrength of each party, ſo as to determine which, in the day of projection, will be the ruling power.* France may at preſent be compared to a man in a violent raging fever, whoſe ſtrength, exalted by his diſeaſe, renders him formidable to all thoſe who approach him. Purulent eruptions, the reſult of his malady, riſe on his body, and continue

* It is obvious that we cannot, conſiſtent with policy or prudence, treat with the National Convention. It ſhould be conſidered whether we may not do ſo with the Jacobin Club, the primary Aſſemblies, or the Sans Culotte aſſaſſins of St. Marceau and St. Antoine, as the members of the Convention have often appealed to them as a ſuperior power.

continue a ſhort time prominent; but dying, they are ſucceeded by others: at length, awakened by a conſtant ſucceſſion of them, and by frenetic exertions, he will ſink into a ſtate of languor and debility. Any perſon who has attentively obſerved the proceedings of the National Convention, muſt have perceived in them a total ignorance of the ſcience of legiſlation, and that their chaotic maſs of laws muſt be a fruitful ſource of diſſenſion, and prevent them from having a permanent government; ſo that another nation may expect that they can adhere to any treaty; but their removing at once the ſalutary influence of religion, ſhould have excluded the moſt diſtant hope that any good faith could have been expected from them. Not only the wiſeſt and moſt poliſhed, but even the moſt barbarous nations, have had ſome religion which they held ſacred, and which they regarded as an eſſential bond of ſociety.

Iſocrates tells us, that the principal care of the Athenians was to aboliſh nothing they had received from their anceſtors in matters of religion, nor to make any addition to what they had eſtabliſhed.* Joſephus mentions, that the Scythians, who delighted in human blood, were very tenacious of their religious rites, and put Anacharſis to death becauſe he preferred thoſe of Greece. Socrates was put to death becauſe he introduced new deities into Athens, and did not eſteem ſuch as were worſhipped in the city. Anaxagoras, the preceptor of Pericles, was baniſhed from Athens, becauſe he entertained exalted ideas of a Supreme intelligent being. But when the Athenians, and the other Grecian republics, about three centuries before Chriſt, adopted the Epicurean ſyſtem, which denied the exiſtence of a God, they,

* Iſocrates Areopagus.

they, like the French, immediately ſunk into the loweſt ſtate of debaſement. Polybius, who was an eye-witneſs of it, tells us, that, in conſequence of it, venality, fraud, treachery, a diſregard of oaths, and of every tie, human and divine, enſued from it, and were the ſure preſage of their ruin. Mæcenas, in his advice to Auguſtus, ſaid to him, "Perform divine worſhip, in all things, "exactly according to the cuſtom of your anceſ- "tors, and ſuffer no innovations in religion, "becauſe thoſe who create ſuch, are apt to make "changes in civil affairs:" Hence conſpiracies, ſeditions, and riots; things very dangerous to Government.*

It was a ſtanding law, of an early date, at Rome, "That no one ſhould have ſeparately new "Gods, nor worſhip privately foreign Gods, un- "leſs admitted by the Commonwealth." †Cicero, who knew better than thoſe modern philoſophers, Voltaire, Rouſſeau, and Helvetius, in what the true dignity of human nature conſiſted, and who wiſhed more than them to promote the happineſs of his fellow-creatures, ſays, "That the ſubver- "ſion of religion muſt be attended with great "confuſion and diſorders, and that if piety to- "wards the Gods be caſt off, mutual good faith, "the bonds of ſociety and juſtice, that moſt ex- "cellent of all virtues, will periſh.‡

Machiavel, a very ſhrewd and ingenious political writer, ſays, "All rulers of kingdoms, and "commonwealths, ought to have a ſpecial re- "gard to the fundamental principles of the reli- "gion of their country; for while they are kept "ſacred and inviolate, it will be an eaſy matter "to

* Dion. Caſſius, lib. lii.
† Cicero de Legibus, lib. ii.
‡ Cicero de Legibus, lib. i.

" to maintain devotion, and conſequently good " order and union amongſt their ſubjects." *

Now the French Convention, at the ſame time that they ſubverted all civil order, contrary to the policy of every wiſe nation, totally removed the ſalutary influence of religion from the people, by which they have converted them into a horde of robbers and aſſaſſins. We do not find, in the annals of hiſtory, any nation that ever equalled, for wanton barbarity and cruelty, the French in their preſent ſtate, but a ſept of people in Syria, whoſe profeſſion was that of murder and robbery.

Their prince or chieftain was called the Old Man of the Mountain. As they made it a practice to ſend forth bravoes to murder kings and princes, many of them paid a tribute to thoſe wretches, to purchaſe their ſafety. They had Lewis of Bavaria murdered in the 13th century. As they were called aſſaſſins, for ſome reaſon not well aſcertained, perſons who made a practice of committing murder have, in ſucceeding times, been denominated aſſaſſins. It is ſurpriſing that this infernal plan of proſtrating religion, which had been ſyſtematically purſued by men of letters in France for many years, ſhould, when publicly avowed, have ſo ſuddenly diffuſed its baneful effects, like a contagion among all the lower orders of the people. Monſieur Diderot, many years ſince, was known to declare, that he wiſhed to ſee the laſt monarch in Europe hanged with the guts of the laſt prieſt. Mirabeau, before he died, expreſſed concern that he did not live to ſee all religions aboliſhed; and yet Cicero, who was an augur, declared that he could ſcarce look in the face of his brother augurs without ſmiling, becauſe in his heart he was convinced of the abſurdity of the Roman

* Political Diſcourſes on Livy, lib. i. chap. 12.

Roman ſuperſtition; but, perſuaded that ſome religious ſyſtem was abſolutely neceſſary for the preſervation of moral harmony, he publicly diſplayed great veneration for that of his own country.

Philip, after having pronounced a long harangue on the virtue of patriotiſm, in the tribune of the Jacobins, produced the heads of his father and mother, which he ſaid he had cut off, becauſe they had refuſed to attend a maſs celebrated by a Conſtitutional prieſt; and he was received with reiterated applauſes. Du Pont, a wretch of the loweſt order, was honoured with loud plaudits when he announced himſelf to be an Atheiſt, in that Pandemonium the National Convention. As ſoon as the Chriſtian religion was renounced, the people diſplayed the moſt ſanguinary ſpirit, in an indiſcriminate ſlaughter of their clergy * and nobility; and at laſt, in gratifying their avarice and private revenge, neither the weakneſs of old age, or childhood, nor the tenderneſs of the ſex, were ſpared. The butcheries occaſioned by the proſcriptions of Marius and Sylla, and the two triumvirates, were moderate compared to this dreadful ſcene of carnage; of which we may ſay, in the words of our great bard, Shakeſpeare,

> And this ſo ſole and ſo unmatchable,
> Shall give a holineſs, a purity,
> To the yet unbegotten ſins of time,
> And prove a deadly bloodſhed but a jeſt,
> Exampled by this heinous ſpectacle.

Many perſons, from malignant views, are endeavouring to propagate an opinion, that we ſhould not interfere in the politics of the continent,

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* A full account of the murder of the French clergy may be ſeen in a book publiſhed by the Abbé Barruelle.

nent, but depend on the ſecurity of our inſular ſituation, and by doing ſo, they have ſpread a ſpirit of diſcontent even among perſons who have the ſincereſt attachment to their country, but who have not leiſure or opportunity to inveſtigate the real intereſt of England. Sir Robert Cotton, the great antiquarian, wrote a treatiſe, in the reign of James I. to prove that England ſhould not pay any regard to foreign wars or foreign acquiſitions, as they tended to exhauſt the kingdom without deriving any ſolid advantage from them; and that Monarch, whoſe puſillanimous and pacific diſpoſition they flattered, was deſpiſed by moſt of the Princes in Europe, in conſequence of having adhered to them. Swayed by ſuch doctrines, he beheld, with the utmoſt indifference, an offenſive league formed by the Houſe of Auſtria, all the Catholic Princes of Germany, Spain, Poland, and even Saxony, which was dangerous to the exiſtence of Holland, by which his ſon-in-law, the Elector Palatine, was deprived of his dominions, and the Proteſtant religion was on the point of being extinguiſhed. He vainly imagined that his virtues of juſtice and moderation were ſo conſpicuous, that the different powers on the Continent would ſubmit to his arbitration. His interpoſition in the affairs of Europe, by no other means than that of entreaties, embaſſies, and negociations, brought him into ſuch contempt, that he was ridiculed for it in a farce at Bruſſels. The wiſe Queen Elizabeth, who laid the foundation of our preſent wealth and power, was far from paying no attention to foreign affairs. She prevented Philip II. from accompliſhing his ſcheme of univerſal empire: not only by providing for the ſecurity of her own dominions, but by employing men and money to occupy him with diviſions abroad. She prevented France from becoming a province

to Spain, which muſt have been fatal to the liberties of Europe; and ſhe afterwards afforded ſuch aſſiſtance to the United Provinces, as enabled them to become an independent ſtate, which has in ſucceeding times tended to preſerve the independence of the other European powers againſt the ambitious views of France. The ſame policy which led her to do ſo, ſhould induce England at this time to riſque her very exiſtence, rather than ſuffer the French to conquer Holland, and to keep poſſeſſion of it and Flanders. Spain, at that time the moſt powerful kingdom in Europe, was particularly formidable to England, by her poſſeſſing a great length of coaſt oppoſite to her, from near Calais to the Texel, containing many capacious harbours; and the extenſive dominions of the Houſe of Burgundy in the rear of it. By this, Spain was enabled not only to annoy our trade to the north, but, by keeping a large army in readineſs to make a deſcent on England, would lay her under a neceſſity of maintaining one of equal force, which would be very expenſive, and in a great meaſure have defeated the advantages of her inſular ſituation. This was evinced in the attempt which Philip II. made to invade England with the Spaniſh armada; for if the Prince of Parma, who had a formidable Spaniſh army in Flanders ready to land in England, had ſucceeded, it is allowed by all our hiſtorians that he would have made a complete conqueſt of it. If the poſſeſſion of that coaſt, only from Dunkirk to the Texel, by the Spaniards, whoſe kingdom is ſo remote from it, was ſo alarming to Queen Elizabeth, ſurely it muſt be much more dangerous to England, to ſuffer France to retain them, as they connect with her very populous kingdom, and as thereby ſhe would command the entire coaſt from Uſhant to the Texel. There is another circum-

ſtance which would make this danger more alarming. At the ſame time that France would have ſo many large harbours to the north-eaſt of Calais, in which a powerful navy may be ready to ſecond an invaſion, England has not a ſingle port to the north of Dover, on the oppoſite coaſt, in which a large fleet could ride with ſafety, and ſail out ſuddenly for her protection, in caſe of emergency; and, as the ſmalleſt delay in ſuch a caſe may be irretrievable, ſhe muſt reſt her defence on a large army, the expence of which would be ruinous. Like a heavy ſuit of armour, which, though it may protect the human body from foreign aſſaults, will gradually conſume its ſtrength, and reduce it to debility. The Engliſh Parliament have conſidered this point ſo important, that they have inſiſted, as a condition in the treaties of Utrecht, Aix-la-Chapelle, and Fontainbleau, that the harbour of Dunkirk ſhould be demoliſhed, though it is fit only for the reception of ſmall privateers. If the poſſeſſion of ſo ſmall a harbour as Dunkirk by the French, has been thought ſo detrimental to England, how alarming muſt be it to her, to ſuffer them to retain all the ports in Flanders and Holland? Another important advantage which France would derive from the poſſeſſion of thoſe countries, and which would give her a very dangerous ſway in the balance of power, is this: By commanding the navigation of the Rhine, the Maeſe, the Scheldt, and the Moſelle, ſhe would have an unbounded power over the trade of many German ſtates, and even materially influence that of Geneva and Swiſſerland. Thoſe who are ignorant of the true intereſt of England, exclaim againſt ſubſidizing foreign ſtates, by which they increaſe popular diſcontent: but as the many objects which I have deſcribed, and on which the preſent proſperity of England depends,

depends, cannot be attained without it, every perſon of candour muſt admit that it is wiſe and neceſſary: it will alſo appear evident that there is great economy in doing ſo. It is abſolutely neceſſary that England ſhould have the aſſiſtance of a large land armament on the continent in time of war, to maintain the balance of power, and to protect her allies and commercial friends. Continental Princes are obliged at all times to maintain large armies for their defence: and they can afford to hire them to England for one half of what ſhe could ſupport her own. Taking into conſideration, then, what ſhe ſaves by keeping but a ſmall military eſtabliſhment in time of peace, ſhe finds it to be very great economy to ſubſidize foreigners during a war. This practice is not new. It has been regularly followed by the miniſters of four ſucceeding princes previous to the preſent reign; and it is not to be ſuppoſed that it would have been invariably followed, unleſs it were wiſe and politic. The great Lord Chatham, whoſe wiſdom and knowledge of the real intereſt of England could be equalled only by his diſintereſtedneſs, which was evinced by the circumſtances in which he died, found it abſolutely neceſſary. There is not a doubt but that a great part of Europe would have been ſubdued by France ſince the beginning of this century, but for the active interference of England. She counted among her allies, in the year, 1747, two Empreſſes, the Kings of Pruſſia, Sardinia, and five German Princes. The late Doctor Campbell, who underſtood, and delineated better than any other writer, the true policy and commercial intereſt of England, has ſanctioned my aſſertions by the moſt unqueſtionable arguments, deduced from hiſtory and experience; and as he wrote coolly and diſpaſſionately, and as his mind was

not

not warped by the rancour and prejudice of party, we ſhould at this time pay ſome reſpect to his opinion. He tells us, " that the firſt point dic-
" tated by our intereſt, is the maintaining others
" in their rights, or, to make uſe of a more known
" term, to ſupport the independency of the powers
" of Europe; becauſe the ſubduing other coun-
" tries muſt leſſen the number of inhabitants,
" extinguiſh induſtry amongſt them, and con-
" ſequently enfeeble and impoveriſh them, which
" muſt be detrimental to us, if we correſpond
" or trade with them. Another point is the ſti-
" pulating with foreign nations, proper terms
" of ſecurity, indulgence, and reſpect for our
" ſubjects, and for the effects which they ſhall
" carry from time to time into thoſe countries, in
" return for which we muſt covenant to do and
" perform what ſhall be done on our parts. When
" theſe kind of alliances are once formed with
" due deliberation, they become ſacred ties with
" reſpect to us, and we are bound punctually to
" fulfil them; ſo that whatever different form
" appearances may wear, the true intereſt of
" Great Britain is always to comply exactly with
" her treaties. The many alterations that hap-
" pen daily in the world afford, and will always
" afford, ſufficient reaſons for our exerting our-
" ſelves, not without hazard and expenſe, in fa-
" vour of ſome or other of our allies; which
" however muſt be done, and done with ſpirit
" and cheerfulneſs, if we remain a free, a great,
" and a reſpected people. It is in vain to hope
" to maintain our character by a ſelfiſh and ſurly,
" or by a lazy and inactive behaviour. If we
" reaſon ever ſo little with ourſelves, we may be
" ſatisfied of this; if we conſult hiſtory, hiſtory
" will convince us; if we have recourſe to expe-
" rience, experience will read us the ſame lec-
" ture. Neither ought we to conſider what we

" do

" do as any burthen or inconveniency, ſince it
" ariſes from the rank and figure we make in the
" world; from thoſe connexions which have been
" the fruit of our ſignificancy, and by which that
" is upheld and ſecured. In ſhort, when we ſuc-
" cour our neighbours, we do it from a principle
" of juſtice to ourſelves; we flouriſh in part
" from the commerce we have with them, and,
" having a ſtake in their welfare, it is really con-
" ſulting our own intereſt when we fulfil thoſe
" engagements that we entered into on account
" of that ſtake; and therefore inſtead of repining
" that we are obliged to it, we ought to rejoice
" that it is in our power, and ſhow by our ala-
" crity that it is our will. Theſe are the general
" principles of Britiſh policy, deduced from thoſe
" tranſactions which, after having been often and
" ferioufly examined in the wiſeſt and greateſt
" aſſemblies, have received repeated, as well as
" public ſanctions."*

A great outcry has been raiſed againſt our ſubſidizing the King of Sardinia, becauſe thoſe who have been ſtung by diſappoinred ambition endeavour to impoſe on the ignorant and credulous multitude, by repreſenting that we have no more connection with him, and ſhould be no more concerned about him than the Great Mogul. Let us ſee now what Doctor Campbell ſays of him; he tells us " that nothing can be of greater im-
" portance to the trade of England than to pre-
" ſerve the balance in Italy; which if loſt, muſt
" neceſſarily throw that valuable branch of com-
" merce, which we enjoy there, and from which
" we derive a conſiderable annual profit, into
" other hands, and which is worſt of all, into the
" hands of the French; that as a trading nation,
" we

* Political Survey of Europe.

" we are as much intereſted to oppoſe the growth " of the French power as the King of Sardinia " himſelf out of regard to his own ſafety. That " this ſufficiently ſhews, that there is nothing of " political art, in what we have been told, of the " expediency of ſupporting this monarch againſt " all his enemies, though at a large expenſe. " He tells us, that Queen Anne, led by the ſame " motives, inſiſted at the concluſion of the treaty " of Utrecht upon the ceſſion of the kingdom of " Sicily to him, and that the crown of Spain, in " caſe of the failure of Philip V. ſhould be en- " tailed on him." We are not induced to ſubſidize the King of Sardinia by any direct commercial connection with him, for his Italian territories are almoſt entirely inland, having but three very inconſiderable ports, thoſe of Nice, Oneglia, and Villa Franca: but as his dominions are ſituated in the plains of Piedmont, at the foot of the Alps, which form a tremendous barrier between him and France; and as he owns, and has fortified all the paſſes in them, he is enabled with a ſmall ſubſidy to protect Italy, with which we have a very extenſive and beneficial trade. We muſt admit, that the French have more than once penetrated into Piedmont, but as the Alps prevent them from ſupplying their army with thoſe conſtant reſources which are abſolutely neceſſary for them, they never have been able to continue in poſſeſſion of it.* We are intereſted in the preſervation of Holland, not only becauſe we carry on a very advantageous trade with her, but becauſe ſhe enables us, as an ally, to ſupport the balance of power againſt the other maritime ſtates. For this reaſon, the different powers of Europe were

* The Alps have been called the Tomb of the French, becauſe great numbers of them have, at different times, fallen in their attempts to paſs theſe mountains.

were so alarmed at the victorious progress of Lewis XIV's arms, in the year 1672, when he attempted to conquer Holland, that the Emperor, and some other Princes of Germany, promised to assist the Dutch; and even Spain sent them a body of troops, though they had renounced their allegiance to her in the preceding century. At that time Lewis XIV. entered Holland with an army of 180,000 men, commanded by the great Marshal Turenne and the Duke of Luxemburg, and conquered the provinces of Guelderland, Overyssel, and Utrecht.* He even took the small town of Naerden, within three leagues of Amsterdam; and yet Holland was saved by an inundation which obliged Lewis to withdraw his troops. Thus it appears that the princes of Europe have, for above two centuries, considered the balance of power so much concerned in the independence of Holland, that France and England assisted her to become free in the 16th century, and Spain, in the succeeding one, aided her against France. Tremendous as the French appear, they cannot, from the nature of things, continue so long. The report recently made by the Committee of Public and General Safety, exhibits a strong picture of the deplorable state to which that kingdom is reduced. It states "that the commerce of France exhibits only "ruins and fragments. It admits, that not only "trade, but domestic industry are entirely extin-

* Lewis XIVth conquered those provinces in a few days; and our British hero, the gallant Duke of York, shewed such consummate skill and prudence in retarding the operations of the French, who were infinitely superior to him in numbers, that they have not been able to enter any part of those provinces, and they have been many weeks in the conquest of Dutch Brabant only; and probably they would not now be in possession of it, but for the intestine feuds of the inhabitants of it.

" guiſhed; and that Marſeilles, Bourdeaux, Ly-
" ons, and Nantz, are in a ſtate of deſolation.
" They deſire the former to recollect the means
" which formed her glory and proſperity; that
" her commune, which prided herſelf on ſupply-
" ing not only her own wants, but thoſe of the
" South of France, ſubſiſts at preſent only on
" the aids granted by government; that with
" difficulty a few merchants could be collected
" there, to form two agencies for the remnant of
" the commerce of the Levant and the coaſt of
" Barbary. That the evils ſuffered by the com-
" mune of Nantz reſound in every ear. Though
" thouſands have periſhed by famine, they ſay,
" we muſt tell France that one of the greateſt
" obſtacles to the reſtoration of commerce and
" exports is the exceſſive conſumption of all
" productions of the ſoil in the interior. They
" ſay, for corn and proviſions, we muſt give in
" exchange a part of our wines; and yet they
" admit that Bourdeaux, in conſequence of the
" great conſumption, cannot furniſh a ſufficient
" quantity for the demand. They allow, that
" many departments have loſt their harveſts by
" hail, rain, and tempeſts; but then they ſay,
" foreign nations ſend you their productions, and
" aſk for your's in return; but you conſume every
" thing yourſelves. Will you offer them metals
" in exchange? what mines have you for that
" purpoſe? Induſtry alone can enable a nation
" to maintain a balance of trade with other na-
" tions." And yet it was lately inſiſted in the Convention, that the preſervation of Liberty depended in keeping the people in a ſtate of inſurrection; and this committee admits, that the raw materials imported for manufactures, are in a ſtate of requiſition in the magazines, and under the ſeals of the republic. It palliates the robberies

ries committed on the half-famiſhed peaſant, in theſe words. " The ſeas long ſhut did not allow " the government to replace, in ſome depart- " ments, the proviſions it had been obliged to " borrow for the uſe of the armies." But when will they be open; not while the frigates of England, Holland, Spain and Portugal, are hovering on their coaſts. It ſeems that borrowing, plundering, and requiſition, are ſynonimous in France. Though numbers are conſtantly murdered by the guillotine, or by aſſaſſins, this committee ſay, " Let us engrave on every heart this maxim, re- " member, republican, that, in whatever part of " France you may be, you are among brothers " and friends." Sugar, their chief article of exportation, by which they had an immenſe balance in the Levant and Baltick trade, they have entirely loſt. They have no revenue, for it has been totally ruined by the extinction of their commerce. Their chief reſource in ſupplying their banditti in Spain, Flanders, Piedmont, and the Rhine, is in plundering *the peaſant of his ſcanty ſtock of proviſions, and even of his cloaths.** Much reliance is laid on the confiſcation of property, but what can that produce in a kingdom ſo impoveriſhed, where wealth dooms the poſſeſſor of it to certain death? In conſequence of a total ſtagnation of the ſale of confiſcated eſtates, it was lately reſolved in the Convention, that thoſe who purchaſe them, ſhall pay a twentieth part of the principal, every year for twenty years. It has frequently occurred in the ſale of theſe eſtates, that the fair and honeſt purchaſers have been deprived of them by the government, on a ſuppoſition that they were bought too cheap. Though

* Monſ. Galliard, a French writer, gives a melancholy picture of this.

their agriculture is much injured from a want of beasts of the plough, they have lately made a requisition of 44,000 horses and mules. They have gulled the people with an assurance, that the vigorous exertions of this campaign will produce a peace. But they can no longer be deluded, and there are insurrections in many parts of France. The peasant and artisan fly to the frontiers to recruit their armies, from the terrors of the guillotine and domestic famine. Can any person be so void of reason as to suppose, that a nation in such a state of desolation can hold out another campaign. The Committee of General Safety says, "It is for you, representatives of the people, "to give great lessons of œconomy. The na- "tions who have recovered, or preserved their "liberty, have been remarkable for their simpli- "city and frugality." This part of the report is true; for it never was known, that so vicious and depraved a people as the French, with so great an extent of empire, could enjoy liberty or happiness under a republic. The Romans, during their primæval simplicity, overturned their regal government at one time, the Decemvirate at another, and could establish a republic in their place; but, on the death of Cæsar, they could not restore liberty, because they were debased by the vices and luxuries of the various nations whom they had subdued. When Caligula was assassinated, the Senate invoked the people to the enjoyment of liberty, but they were too degenerate for the restoration of it. Machiavel observes, "How hard it is for a people that have been "used to live in subjection under a prince, to "preserve their liberty, if by any means they "become free; indeed it cannot be otherwise; "for the multitude differs but little from a wild "beast." Again he says, "we must lay it down

"as

" as a certain truth, that a corrupted ſtate, which " has been accuſtomed to the dominion of a " prince, can never become free, though that " prince, and his whole race ſhould be extin- " guiſhed."*

Machiavel alludes to the eſtabliſhment of a republic in the place of monarchy. The Romans, galled by the factions of Marius and Sylla and the two Triumvirates, and exhauſted by the baniſhments, the confiſcations, and the bloodſhed occaſioned by them, gladly ſought repoſe in the government of one perſon. From the ſtrong and lively deſcription which Tacitus gives of their calamitous ſtate, one would imagine that he had the preſent ſituation of France in contemplation, for there is very great analogy between them, both in their cauſes and effects. He who doubts that their miſeries will not ſoon terminate in monarchy, has received no light from the ſtudy of human nature, or the hiſtory of civil government. Tacitus ſays, " That the Romans conſidered the " government of one perſon as an aſylum from " their former perilous ſtate under a republic, " and that the inhabitants of the provinces con- " curred with them, becauſe they could have no " confidence in the government of the Senate " and the people, on account of the contentions " of the great, and the avarice of the magiſtrates; " and becauſe the laws, being trampled on by " violence, by canvaſſing for votes, and by cor- " ruption, afforded them but a feeble protec- " tion."†

I ſhall

* Obſervations on Livy, Lib. i. Chap. 16, 17.

† Tuta & preſentia, quam vetera & periculoſa mallent, neque provinciæ illum rerum ſtatum abnuebant, ſuſpecto ſenatus populique imperio, ob certamina potentium & avaritiam magiſtratuum, invalido legum auxilio, quæ vi ambit poſtremo pecunia turbabantur.

I ſhall now proceed to give you my thoughts on the other ſubjects which we diſcuſſed. Thoſe who wiſh to enlarge the conſtituent body, ſeem to think it too corrupt, and they expect to dilute and purify it, by conferring the elective franchiſe on a greater number of the community than enjoy it at preſent; but, unleſs the people, on whom they would thus beſtow it, are of purer principles than thoſe who poſſeſs it already, their theory falls to the ground; and, inſtead of deriving any advantage from it, they will only render elections more turbulent and ſeditious than before, and extend more widely than ever the baneful effects of ebriety, perjury, and corruption. Such political empirics remind me of an experiment which was formerly made in phyſic, of transfuſing blood from the veins of one perſon into thoſe of another, in order to meliorate his habit of body, on a preſumption that the blood of the former was purer than that of the latter; but modern innovators, contrary to this rule, would propoſe to purify one body, by infuſing into it a portion of another leſs pure. The true reaſon of requiring any qualification in point of property in voters, is, not to admit ſuch perſons as are in ſo mean a ſituation, as that, having no opinion of their own, they may diſpoſe of their votes under ſome undue influence, and becauſe they are incapable of judging of the competency of a candidate. By teaching the mechanic and peaſant to ſpeculate on politics, you will, without gaining any one advantage from it, rob ſociety of their ſobriety and induſtry. If we take a retroſpective view of the origin of the qualification of an elector, it will appear, from the material alteration which it has undergone in point of value, by the increaſe of the precious metals, the progreſs of luxury, and the great enhancement of the price of all articles

of

of life, that a large portion of the people enjoy the elective franchiſe, whom the wiſdom of the legiſlature originally intended to exclude from it. The county court, in which the ſheriff preſided, was originally of great dignity and extenſive juriſdiction. On the firſt inſtitution of repreſentatives for counties, none had votes in the election of knights, but ſuch as owed ſuit and ſervice to the county court, that is, perſons of ſuch conſideration as held their property immediately of the crown; for ſuch as held of meſne lords, owed ſuit and ſervice to their lords court. What contributed materially to the alteration of the conſtitution in this point, as well as in reſpect of juries, was a ſhameful indolence in the country gentlemen, who, not wiſhing to attend in perſon, at county courts, obtained particular privileges, allowing them to appear there by proxy. Simon de Montfort, an ambitious traitor, who in a rebellion againſt Henry III. made him and all the royal family priſoners, rendered ſuch privileges general, to conciliate the regard of the gentry, by exempting them from the burthen of attendance; and the lower claſs of people, by conferring a privilege on them, which till then had been confined to their ſuperiors. The proxies thus deputed by the leading men of property, were generally ſome of their own freeholders, who, came in proceſs of time to be put on juries, in county courts, when there was not enough of the immediate tenants of the crown in court. Thus, by the negligence of gentlemen of good landed property, the county courts came to be debaſed, as they were moſtly compoſed of mean freeholders, too ſubject to corruption, and ſeldom qualified by their knowledge, judgment, virtue or independence, to decide in cauſes that came before them in judicature. But it does not appear, that

that theſe freeholders under meſne lords, ever had a ſhare in the election of knights of the ſhire, till the tumultuary parliament in the firſt year of the reign of Henry IV. That monarch, who obtained the crown by the murder of Richard II. thinking theſe inferior freeholders proper inſtruments to ſupport his uſurpation, endeavoured to attach them to him, by eſtabliſhing their right of voting; and for that purpoſe procured an act of parliament to be paſſed, in the ſeventh year of his reign, appointing the knights of the ſhire to be elected in the firſt county court held after the receipt of the writs, by all preſent, as well ſuitors duly ſummoned, as others,* In conſequence of this innovation, infinite riots and diſorders enſued at elections, as every freeholder even of 1s. or 6d. claimed a right of voting. Theſe evils became ſo alarming in the reign of Henry VI. that the legiſlature found it neceſſary to apply a remedy to them; and they enacted the 8th of Henry VI. c. 7. in the year 1429, for that purpoſe. The preamble, which ſufficiently evinces the neceſſity there was for paſſing it, is an excellent admonition to ſuch ſpeculative innovators, as wiſh to make an experiment on our conſtitution, by admitting the giddy and uninformed multitude to the enjoyment of the elective franchiſe.

" Whereas the elections of knights of the " ſhire have now of late been made by very " great outrageous and exceſſive numbers of pea- " ple, dwelling within the ſame counties, of " which

* It is remarkable, that in all popular ſtates, ambitious leaders have ever made uſe of the giddy multitude as an engine to obtain power, or to preſerve it when uſurped. Thus Montfort and Henry IV. in England; Themiſtocles, Pericles, and Alcibiades, in Athens; the Gracchi, Sylla, and Cæſar, in Rome, courted the people for that purpoſe.

" which the moſt part was of people of ſmall " ſubſtance and of no value, whereof many of " them pretended a voice equivalent as to ſuch " elections to be made, with the moſt worthy " knights and eſquires dwelling within the ſame " counties, whereby manſlaughters, riots, bat- " teries, and diviſions, among the gentlemen " and other people of the ſame county, ſhall very " likely riſe and be, unleſs convenient and due " remedy be provided in this behalf." It then enacts, " that no perſon ſhall vote at any county " election, who was not ſeiſed of a freehold of " 40s. a year, and reſided in ſuch county; but " this not removing the evil, it became neceſſary " two years after, to provide that the freehold of " 40s. ſhould lie within the ſame county." Let us now endeavour to inveſtigate the value of 40s. at that period, that is, what comforts and neceſ- ſaries of life could be procured for it. Biſhop Latimer, in a ſermon preached before Edward VI. mentions, that his father, having no land of his own, rented a farm at 3l. or 4l. a year; that he tilled a ſufficiency thereof to maintain ſix men; that he kept thirty oxen and one hundred ſheep; that he was enabled on it, to give him a good education, and a portion of 5l. to each of his ſiſters, and to provide a man and horſe to attend the king in his wars; that he was as hoſpi- table and charitable as any of his neighbours. As he ſays, that he remembered to have buckled on his father's armour at Blackheath, the period he alluded to muſt have been about 1480, the latter end of Edward IVth's reign; which was 51 years after the qualification of an elector was aſ- certained. And he tells us at the time he preached his ſermon, which was about 50 years after, that a perſon, who occupied the ſame farm, paid 16l. a year rent, and that he was not able to do any

thing for his prince, for himself, or his children, or to give a cup of drink to the poor.*

Now we may fairly infer, that such comforts of life, as the bishop boasts his father to have enjoyed, could not be procured for less than 300l. a year at present. Bishop Fleetwood, in his Chronicon Pretiosum, an ingenious treatise, written in the reign of Charles II. for the purpose of ascertaining the price of provisions, and the value of the precious metals, between that period and the reign of Henry VI. tells us, that they were enhanced in a fourfold proportion; and I think it must be admitted, that they are five times dearer than they were in the reign of Charles II. not only from the increase of specie, but the prodigious quantity of paper money, which has come into circulation. According to this calculation, the qualification of an elector should not now be less than 40l. Carte, a very learned historian, was of this opinion; and he is dead about 50 years. The average price of wheat in Henry VIth's reign, was from 4s. to 4s. 6d. the quarter, at the rate of 40s. or 45s. of our present money; that of an ox from 4s. to 4s. 6d. that of a sheep, from 4d. to 6d. Thus it appears, from what I have now stated, that the elective franchise has, in process of time, fallen into the hands of a class of the people, whom the legislature intended to exclude from it, becaufe they were incompetent to exercise it. Theoretic innovators are vehement in making elections more popular than they are at present, on a presumption that they would be more consonant to justice and equality, and less liable to influence; but experience condemns such a change, as it must render them

* Latimer's Sermons, folio 32, edit. 1635.

them ſubject to the influence of the worſt men, and productive of tumult and corruption. The uninformed multitude may be practiſed on, to purpoſes however violent, however depraved; but what appeal can be made to their reaſon, beyond their competence, beyond their feelings? Can the peaſant who holds the plough, or the blackſmith who ſtands at an anvil, have judgment to decide between the political merit of two candidates, their votes in former parliaments, or the principles that are likely to determine their conduct in future? But let a candidate appear before them, who promiſes to aboliſh all taxes and rents, to reduce the price of gin, to lay embargoes on corn, and to let them plunder farmers granaries, ſuch arguments they will underſtand, and ſuch a candidate will be borne triumphant on the ſhoulders of the people, while his oppoſer will be trodden under their feet. The preſent ſtate of France furniſhes an irrefragable proof of the fatal conſequences of converting the induſtrious part of the community into politicians, and of appealing to their deciſions. The maſs of the people in a ſtate may be compared to the life blood of the human body, which, if pure, will produce health and vigour; but if impure, will kindle fevers, or produce debility and languor; though that body may be formed according to the ſtricteſt principles of ſymmetry and juſt proportion. This is illuſtrated by the ſituation of ſome new towns in England, which have ſuddenly riſen by trade to great opulence, becauſe the honourable privilege of ſending delegates to parliament has not been imparted to them; nay, they deprecate that honour, becauſe it would induce idleneſs and ebriety, and be attended with ſerious miſchief to their manufactures. The advocates

for univerſal ſuffrage contend, that the fatal conſequences which have conſtantly ariſen in republics, from the direct interference of the multitude in matters of legiſlation, will be avoided by the repreſentative ſyſtem, of which the ancients were totally ignorant: but the ſtate of France, where it is limited, proves, when it is enjoyed by a large portion of the people, that their opinions, their caprices, and prejudices, will preſs on the repreſentatives of the people in ſuch an irreſiſtible torrent, that they cannot oppoſe them without danger; and artful ſeditious men will ever be ready to flatter and agitate the people, and to ſolicit their interference. As the French have adopted this ſyſtem, common prudence ſuggeſts, that we ſhould ſee whether it will thrive with them, and if it promotes moral harmony and induſtry, and ſecures all ſocial rights, better than our own, let us embrace it. The great Lord Bacon gives us the following advice in his Eſſays on the Subject of Reform: "It is good not to try "experiments in ſtates, except the neceſſity be "urgent, or the utility evident: and well to be-"ware, that it be the reformation that draweth "on the change, and not the deſire of change "that pretendeth the reformation. And laſtly, "that the novelty, though it be not rejected, yet "be held for a ſuſpect; and as the Scripture "ſayeth, that we make a good ſtand upon the "ancient way, and then look about us and diſ-"cover what is the ſtraight and right way, and "ſo to walk in it." As many innovators, who declaim loudly againſt our conſtitution, and urge a neceſſity of reſtoring it to its priſtine purity, and of re-eſtabliſhing the rights of the people, which is their general language; I am led to draw a ſhort compariſon between the ancient and preſent ſtate of it, by which the balance will appear much

much in favour of the latter, and that the life, the liberty and property of the ſubject, were but badly ſecured before the petition of rights in the reign of Charles I. and that they are at this time better guarded than at any former period, or in any other ſtate in Europe. In ſhort, before James the Firſt's reign, our hiſtory preſents nothing but a ſtruggle between the violent exertions of monarchical deſpotiſm and ariſtocratical turbulence, while the people were in a downright ſtate of ſlavery; at the ſame time the police of England was worſe than that of any other kingdom in Europe.* Peter de la Mare, who was the firſt ſpeaker of the Houſe of Commons, was impriſoned by Edward III. for liberty of ſpeech. When this monarch was building Windſor Caſtle, he iſſued writs to the ſheriffs of many counties, ordering them, under the penalty of 100l. each, to ſend to Windſor the beſt diggers and hewers of ſtone within their bailiwicks, and to oblige them to give ſufficient ſecurity not to depart thence without the licence of William of Wyckham; and writs were iſſued to the ſheriffs of London, commanding them to make proclamation to inhibit any perſon, whether clerk or layman, under forfeiture of all they had forfeitable, from employing and retaining any ſuch tradeſman, and to arreſt ſuch of them as had run away, and commit them to Newgate. Writs were iſſued in the 36th year of his reign to the ſheriffs of ſeveral counties, commanding them, under the penalty of 200l. to ſend to Windſor on a particular day, ſkilful maſons and diggers of ſtone.† Edward III. made ſuch a common practice of violating the great charter,

* In doing this it will be unneceſſary to go higher than the reign of Edward III.

† Aſhmole's Hiſtory of the Order of the Garter.

charter, that he was required to grant no leſs than twenty confirmations of it. In his reign, robbers, thieves, and murderers, were very common in England, and were protected and encouraged by the Barons, who employed them againſt their enemies. The King obtained a ſolemn promiſe from the Barons in Parliament, that they would break off all connection with them.* He exerciſed a diſpenſing power, erected monopolies, exacted loans, ſtopped the progreſs of criminal and civil juſtice by particular warrants, preſſed both men and ſhips into his ſervice, levied arbitrary and exorbitant fines. He extended the authority of the Privy Council and Star Chamber to the deciſion of private caſes, enlarged the power of the Mareſchals and other arbitrary courts, impriſoned members of Parliament for freedom of ſpeech. He conſtantly levied taxes arbitrarily, and without conſent of Parliament. One time they remonſtrated againſt it; but he anſwered, that he would adviſe with his council; and he poſitively refuſed to paſs a law for puniſhing thoſe who raiſed ſuch arbitrary impoſitions. Moſt of the Plantagenet princes maintained and exerciſed theſe extraordinary powers: but thoſe of the Houſe of Lancaſter were more moderate in the practice of them, as the doubtfulneſs of their title kept them in awe.

Henry VII. conſtantly exalted his prerogative above law. Early in his reign, the authority of the Star Chamber, founded on common law and antient practice, was in ſome caſes extended and confirmed by Act of Parliament.† It exerciſed a diſcretionary power of fining, impriſoning, and inflicting corporal puniſhment, without the intervention

* Cotton's Abridgment.

† Rot. Parl. 3d Hen. VII. 11. 17.

vention of a jury; but did not puniſh capitally. It had juriſdiction over all offences, contempts, and diſorders, which were not within the reach of common law; and yet Lord Bacon praiſed the uſe of it. The members of it conſiſted of privy counſellors and judges, who held their places during pleaſure. In this reign it was employed as an engine to extort fines and pecuniary penalties from the ſubject.

Lord Clarendon tells us, that its authority was exerted to enforce proclamations, orders of ſtate, monopolies, and illegal commiſſions. The Court of the Conſtable, which exiſted ſince the time of William the Conqueror, exerciſed martial law with unbounded juriſdiction; and was not governed in its proceedings by any fixed rules whatever: it even inflicted capital puniſhment. It would have been a dreadful engine of tyranny in the King, but that, having been commonly granted for life, it was not under his immediate controul. For this reaſon Henry VIII. aboliſhed it: however, martial law continued afterwards to be exerciſed, till aboliſhed by the Petition of Rights. In the year 1495 the Parliament paſſed a law, empowering Henry VII. to levy all ſuch ſums as any perſon had agreed to pay by way of benevolence. Henry VII. demanded a ſubſidy, and 3-15ths, to marry his daughter to the King of Scotland. Sir Thomas Moore, then but 22 years old, was the only perſon in the Houſe of Commons who dared to oppoſe it. For this the King picked a quarrel with his father, committed him to the Tower, and fined him 100l. and Sir Thomas was obliged to leave the bar, and had ſome thoughts of quitting the kingdom for ſome years.* Aſſociations of large bodies of the people, in uniform,

* Biographia Brit. Life of Sir Thomas Moore.

form, and under the protection of the barons, for the purpose of committing murders, rapes, and robberies, and exercising private vengeance, and even of giving evidence in courts of justice, continued, from a very early period, till the reign of Henry VII.; and in his time they rose to such an excess, that many laws were passed to restrain them; however, they were frequently practised afterwards. By 31st of Henry VIII. the Parliament gave the King's proclamation the force of law, and enjoined obedience to it, under whatever penalties he should choose to impose. Another law was passed, that any nine privy counsellors should form a legal court for punishing all disobedience to proclamations. At that period, the Parliament were so little jealous of their privileges, that one Strode, a member, was heavily fined by the stannery courts, and was loaded with irons, and thrown into a dungeon, because he refused to pay the fines; and this for no other reason, than because he introduced a bill regarding tin; yet the Parliament took no other notice of it, than to pass a law that no man should be afterwards questioned for his conduct in Parliament. Henry VIII. levied the duties of tonnage and poundage without the authority of Parliament; and his successor continued to do so. Edward VI. wrote circular letters to sheriffs, recommending particular members for counties; and he ordered them in other instances to obey, in that respect, the orders of his privy-counsellors. Queen Mary pursued the like method, in the election of members of Parliament. Both she and Edward VI. wound their prerogative as high as Henry VIII. Queen Elizabeth surpassed all her predecessors in the exercise of it. She extended the court of Star Chamber over all persons, and to every species of delinquency, not

within the verge of common or ſtatute law, or in other words, to every thing that the court thought proper to take amiſs. Though it did not puniſh capitally, yet it inflicted ſuch corporal puniſhments as were worſe than death, and ſuch ruinous fines, as tended to make life a burthen.

Another dreadful engine of her adminiſtration, was the high commiſſion court. Its department included all ſpiritual tranſgreſſions; among which, not only inceſt and adultery, but even fornication, was comprehended, all deviations from uniformity in public worſhip, and all errors in opinion. It was ſubject to no inhibition from the civil courts, and its puniſhment had no reſtriction.

Beſides theſe abuſes which were permanent, there was another occaſional one, ſtill more dangerous; this was the proclamation of martial law. Whenever this monſter was let looſe, the provoſt martial, the lord lieutenant of a county, or any of his deputies, could inſtantly put to death whomever they thought proper. Had this dreadful engine been confined to times of rebellion, or dangerous inſurrection, it might have been juſtified on the ground of political neceſſity; but it was ſometimes granted when no ſuch pretexts exiſted. In the year 1595, Elizabeth commiſſioned Sir Thomas Wilford to execute, by martial law, all ſuch perſons in London, and the counties contiguous, whom the magiſtrates ſhould repreſent as notorious vagabonds; nay, ſhe ordered martial law to be enforced againſt ſuch perſons as ſhould import papal bulls, or forbidden books or pamphlets. This ſanguinary exerciſe of martial law appears in one ſignal inſtance. Soon after the diſturbance occaſioned by the earls of Northumberland and Weſtmoreland, which had more the appearance of a frantic riot than a dangerous re-

bellion, the provoſt martial executed, in cold blood, eight hundred perſons who had been, more or leſs, concerned in it. Whoever compares the ſacrifices made to juſtice, after the rebellions in 1715 and 1745, or even with the ſeverities of Jefferies, in the reign of James II. will perceive that the rigour of Elizabeth's age far exceeded them. The liberty of the preſs was incompatible with the maxims of her government. By a decree of the Star Chamber, ſhe forbid any book to be printed but in London, Oxford, or Cambridge; and by another, ſhe prohibited, under ſevere penalties, the publiſhing any book or pamphlet contrary to the form or meaning of any ſtatute, or againſt any injunction made or ſet forth by her or her privy-council, or againſt the form or meaning of any of her letters-patent, or commiſſions or prohibitions under the great ſeal: every publication, even down to ballads, was made ſubject to inſpectors appointed for that purpoſe. Forty-four ſheets of Hollingſhead's Chronicle were cancelled by order of the council; and on reading theſe caſtrations (for they have ſince been publiſhed) one can ſcarcely diſcern how or why they were obnoxious. When Elizabeth was inclined to marry the Duke of Anjou, one Stubbs, a lawyer, publiſhed a pamphlet, containing arguments againſt it. For this offence, he and his printer were condemned to loſe their right hands. Stubbs, though a puritan, was very loyal, and ſhewed wonderful reſignation to the ſentence; for as ſoon as he ſuffered the amputation, he took off his hat with his left hand, and ſaid, God ſave the Queen.* Stowe mentions the names of ſeveral writers who ſuffered at the gallows for publiſhing what he ſtyles offenſive, and at other times ſeditious performances.

* Strype's Annals, vol. iii. p. 148.

formances. Purveyance was another tyrannic grievance in her reign. Theſe purveyors ſeized at diſcretion on all kinds of proviſion, allowed a much lower rate than the market price, and were very tedious in paying for them. The people muſt have ſuffered ſeverely from thoſe galling oppreſſions, as ſome counties paid 2000l. a-year to be exempt from them.* What was ſtill more mortifying, the purveyors ſeized on trees; and often took ſuch as were ornamental, and afforded ſhelter to gentlemen's houſes. Elizabeth's manner of preſſing for the army and navy was ſingularly grievous.

When men were wanting, ſhe compelled the counties, on which they were applotted, to raiſe, arm, clothe, and conduct them to the ſea-ports, entirely at their own expenſe. The oppreſſions attending this practice, appear from a ſpeech of Mr. Glaſcock, a member of the Houſe of Commons. *If a warrant* (ſays he) *comes from the council to levy one hundred men, the magiſtrate will levy two hundred; and then by chopping in and croſſing out, he will gain one hundred men by the bargain.* This method was to fix, at firſt, on thoſe he knew to be leaſt willing to ſerve, and beſt able to pay him for excuſing their default.† Stowe relates one inſtance of preſſing, which was very remarkable. When the Londoners were aſſembled in their churches, on an Eaſter Sunday, to receive the ſacrament, the doors were ſuddenly cloſed by the city officers, who ſeized one thouſand of the congregation; and on that evening they were ſent as recruits to the coaſt of France. Of all the grievances of her reign, that of granting monopolies was moſt extenſively ruinous. The grantee of a

 monopoly

* Biograph. Britan. Philips, (Fabian)
† Parliamentary Hiſtory, vol. iv.

monopoly had no other view but to make it as lucrative as poſſible. Moſt of the neceſſary articles, ſuch as paper, beer, ale, leather, corn, iron, tin, lead, ſea-coal, fiſh, and even ſalt, were conſigned to theſe vultures, who affixed what price they choſe to them. They at one time raiſed ſalt from 1s. 4d. to 15s. a buſhel. Elizabeth aſſumed a power, which ſhe frequently exerciſed, of ſtopping the current of juſtice. If any perſon were involved in a law-ſuit, or even threatened with one, he could obtain, if he had a friend at court, a warrant from the Queen, to exempt him from all civil ſuits or criminal proſecutions. Some of theſe inſtruments are to be found in Rymer's Fœdera, containing poſitive declarations that ſhe granted them by virtue of her prerogative, which ſhe would not ſuffer to be diſputed. Thus ſhe, like Venus in Homer and Virgil, could furniſh her favourites with a ſuit of armour, which enabled them to ſet juſtice at defiance. Torture was conſidered as a neceſſary engine of her government, and was conſtantly made uſe of. The Duke of Norfolk's ſervants (and they were probably numerous) underwent this barbarity. Hacket, the enthuſiaſt, was tortured. One Richard Toplift, a prieſt-catcher, ſpeaks jocularly of different kinds of torture, in a letter preſerved by Strype.* He recommended it to be tried upon Robert Southwell, a friar, and he engaged that it would extort from him every ſecret in his heart. The Queen propoſed to torture Sir John Haywood the hiſtorian, on account of his compoſitions, which happened to offend her, though without a ſhadow of cauſe; and it would have been inflicted upon him, but for the humane interference of Sir Francis Bacon. When one was obnoxious to

* Vol. iv. p. 132.

to Queen Elizabeth, or ſeemed likely to obſtruct her views, ſhe compelled him to accept a lucrative employment abroad. Another hardſhip was, that no nobleman could marry without her conſent. The Earl of Southampton was impriſoned, and deprived of his commiſſion as general of horſe in Ireland, for having indulged his inclinations, without the conſent of the court. During her reign no nobleman was allowed to travel without having previouſly obtained a licence from the court.* The Houſe of Commons has ever been conſidered as the guardian of the rights of the people; and we ſhould expect that it would have relieved the ſubjects from ſuch accumulated oppreſſion. Let us examine how Elizabeth treated that auguſt body. It was a fundamental maxim with her, that Parliaments ſhould not diſcuſs any matters of ſtate, or any eccleſiaſtical concern. Sir Edward Coke, the Speaker, in 1593, uſed theſe words: *I am commanded, on my allegiance, if any bill ſhould be exhibited touching matters of ſtate, or cauſes eccleſiaſtical, not to read it.*† The former of theſe inhibitions was never infringed; and if it ever was attempted, puniſhment was ſure to follow. When a bill was introduced, in the year 1593, for regulating the ſucceſſion to the Crown, four eminent members were impriſoned for their preſumption; and afterwards, when a member made a motion to addreſs her Majeſty to releaſe them, thoſe members who were of her privy-council oppoſed the motion, declaring that their interpoſition would make their caſe the worſe.‡ When William Morris brought in a bill for correcting abuſes in the biſhops' courts, he was removed from his place as chancellor of the duchy,

* Political Survey of Britain, lib. i. chap. v.
† Parliamentary Hiſtory. ‡ Ibid.

duchy, disabled from practising as a lawyer, and imprisoned for several years in Tilbury castle. *

She absolutely proceeded so far, as to restrain them from all acts of legislation. The following words are to be found in the Lord Keeper's speech in 1593: *Her Majesty has willed me to signify unto you, that this Parliament is not called to make any new laws, for there are a sufficient number; wherefore it is her pleasure that your time be not spent therein.* † The Parliament of Queen Elizabeth scarce ever presumed to entertain any other points than the three following: First, arranging some minute particulars of internal economy, which she thought fit to leave to their direction. Secondly, sanctioning any unpopular measures, the odium of which she would avoid. And lastly, (but above all) imposing taxes on the people; and as this was avowedly regarded as their principal function, she claimed great merit in seldom calling one; and accordingly, at one period of her reign, she did not call one for five years. In the instructions composed by Burleigh for the Speaker's speech in 1592, he is instructed to display, as a proof of her Majesty's benignity to her people, her unwillingness to call Parliaments. ‡ In this paper we are informed that the court directed the Speaker what he should speak, and that he was the mouthpiece of the minister as much as of the House. We may form some idea of the extent of senatorial eloquence in her days, by the words of the Lord Keeper, Sir Edward Puckering. When Sir Edward Coke, the Speaker, requested that the House might be indulged in freedom of speech, "*privilege of speech is granted; but you must know* "*what privilege you have; not to speak what every* "*one*

* Hume. † Parliamentary History.
‡ Strype's Annals, vol. iv. p. 124.

" *one liſteth, or what cometh into his brain to utter,* " *but your privilege is Aye or No.*" * The judges, in 1561, ſolemnly determined that England was an abſolute empire. It may perhaps be thought, that they annexed to the word abſolute ſome meaning different from the common acceptation, but the words which follow them will aſcertain it, which words aſſert, that England is an abſolute empire, and that the Queen, by her own authority, might have erected the high commiſſion court, without being impowered by any act of parliament.

Now if ſhe could eſtabliſh, and ſet in motion ſo dreadful an engine of tyranny by her own fiat, ſhe muſt have been deemed abſolute in the fulleſt ſenſe of the word.† It was alſo determined judicially in her reign, that any perſon impriſoned by her authority, could not be bailed. ‡ The Queen, ſays Sir Francis Bacon in one of his ſpeeches, hath both an enlarging and reſtraining power: ſhe can ſet at liberty by her prerogative things reſtrained by ſtatute, and ſhe can reſtrain by her prerogative things that are at liberty. § During, and previous to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the Houſe of Commons were of ſuch little weight in the balance of the conſtitution, that it was uſual with the Chancellor to uſe diſcretionary authority in iſſuing new writs to ſupply the place of any members whom he judged incapable of attending, either on account of their employment, or ſickneſs, or any other impediment, which gave the miniſter a power of garbling the Houſe at pleaſure; and ſo little jealous were the Commons of it, that they confirmed it by their votes in the 23d of Elizabeth. ‖ James the Firſt had as high notions

* Parliamentary Hiſtory. † Hume. ‡ Ibid.
§ Parliamentary Hiſtory. ‖ Journals, Jan. 19, 1580.

tions of his prerogative as Queen Elizabeth. He continued to exercise such as may be deemed incompatible with civil liberty. He raised money on the subject by way of benevolence or free-gift. He imprisoned two members of the House of Commons, Sir Edwyn Sandys and Mr. Selden, for no other reason than the extraordinary zeal which they shewed in discharge of their duty. * At another time he committed Sir Edward Coke and Sir Robert Philips to the Tower: Selden, Pym, and Mallory, to other prisons. † I think it right to observe, as an instance of the frailty of our nature, that Sir Edward Coke, who, when Speaker of the House of Commons in Elizabeth's reign, told that assembly that they should not meddle with state affairs, or matters of a religious concern, became now a violent opponent of the court. James exercised the power which Elizabeth did, of employing such members as were obnoxious to him, in any public service he chose. He sent Sir Dudley Digges, Sir Thomas Crew, Sir Nathaniel Rich, and Sir James Perrat, to Ireland, under the pretext of executing business there. ‡ In the year 1621 he wrote a letter to the Speaker, in which he severely rebuked the members, for having presumed to meddle with any thing that regarded his government, or deep matters of state; which he said were far above their capacity. § However the House of Commons adopted some spirited resolutions in this reign, which laid the foundation of that liberty which they asserted in the subsequent one; and monopolies were condemned by act of parliament, as contrary to law, in 1624. In this reign Sir Roger Owen, though a patriot, declared in the House, when arguing against arbitrary impositions, that the King of England was endued with as ample power as any prince in Christendom. ‖

* Journals, Dec. 1, 1621. † Franklyn, p. 66.
‡ Ibid. § Hume, chap. 48. ‖ Journals, April 18, 1614.

This monſtrous fabric of deſpotiſm was demoliſhed by one blow in the next reign; for by the petition of rights, in the year 1628, an eternal remedy was provided againſt forced loans and benevolences, taxes without conſent of Parliament, arbitrary impriſonment, billetting of ſoldiers, and martial law. By the 16th Charles I. chap. 10. if any perſon be deprived of his liberty by order or decree of any illegal court, or by the commandment of his Majeſty in perſon, or by warrant of the council board, or any of the privy council, he ſhall, on demand, have a writ of habeas corpus to bring him before the Court of King's Bench or Common Pleas, who ſhall determine on the legality of his commitment; and by the 31ſt Charles II. commonly called the Habeas Corpus Act, the method of obtaining the benefit of this act is ſo obvious and ſummary, that a ſubject muſt be diſcharged immediately if committed contrary to law. Much has been ſaid againſt ſuſpending this act, though it has been often done in times leſs perilous than the preſent. The court of Areopagus at Athens had a general cenſorial power, which in many caſes, extended to impriſonment at diſcretion, and even to death. The Cenſors at Rome could degrade any perſon from his rank for any public violation of morals. One of them degraded Rufinus, an anceſtor of Sylla, becauſe he had plate in his houſe to the amount of five marks. The appointment of a Dictator ſuſpended all law; and when the ſenate in times of danger paſſed a vote, *ne quid detrimenti reſpublica capiat*, every inferior magiſtrate was inveſted with power equal with that of the Dictator. The Crown ſtill enjoyed conſiderable wealth from the appendages of the military tenures, which were very grievous and oppreſſive to the ſubjects; ſuch as wardſhips, liveries, primer ſeiſins,

ſins, values and forfeitures of marriages, ouſterlemain, fines for alienation, tenures by homage, knights' ſervice, eſcuage, aids for marrying the daughter and knighting the ſon, and tenures held of the king *in capite*; all which were aboliſhed by the 12th of Charles II. and in conſideration of it the King obtained the hereditary exciſe. Theſe tenures formed a moſt complicated ſyſtem of ſlavery, and yet they were the inherent and unqueſtionable right of the Crown. An able writer on our laws obſerves, that this ſtatute was a greater acquiſition to civil property than even Magna Charta itſelf; ſince that had only pruned the luxuriances, which had grown out of the military tenures, and thereby preſerved them in vigour; but the ſtatute of Charles extirpated the whole, and demoliſhed both root and branches. To theſe ſucceeded the Bill of Rights, or declaration delivered by the Lords and Commons to the Prince and Princeſs of Orange, 13th Feb. 1688, and afterwards paſſed into a law, by which the freedom of our conſtitution in church and ſtate is eſtabliſhed in the cleareſt and moſt unequivocal terms; and by the coronation oath, which was entirely new-modelled in the year 1689, the king and queen are obliged to ſwear, in the moſt explicit manner, to maintain them. It was aſſerted again, at the commencement of the preſent century, by the Act of Settlement, when new proviſions were added for ſecuring our religion, laws, and liberties. By the ſtatute of 1ſt Anne, chap. 7, the Crown is reſtrained from aliening the demeſne lands, or even from letting them for any term longer than three lives, or 31 years, though till that period the Engliſh monarchs enjoyed them without the controul of parliament. His preſent Majeſty has contributed very much to preſerve the liberty of the ſubject, and render the adminiſtration

adminiſtration of juſtice chaſte, by making the judges independent of the Crown, which was his own voluntary act. General warrants have been condemned in the preſent reign. The act for determining conteſted elections by a Committee of the Houſe of Commons on oath, has completely ſecured the freedom of election. The act which requires, in the caſe of a perſon indicted for a libel, that the law and fact ſhall be decided by a jury, has reſcued the ſubject from the poſſibility of being oppreſſed by a ſevere or arbitrary judge; and has eſtabliſhed the liberty of the preſs on a firm baſis. I will now appeal to the candid reader, whether a more perfect ſyſtem of liberty can be deviſed by human wiſdom than that which I have deſcribed. Thoſe who contend for the neceſſity of reforming the conſtitution cannot deny the facts which I have laid down; but they will aſſert, that the influence of the Crown is more dangerous than the prerogatives which I have ſtated; and ſome have maintained that it ſhould be entirely removed, others that it ſhould only be diminiſhed. But thoſe who are well acquainted with the hiſtory and progreſſive improvements of our conſtitution, and with the nature of man, ſo eſſentially neceſſary to form a juſt notion of the true principles of civil polity, muſt acknowledge that this influence conſtitutes the chief excellence of ours. As theory and abſtract reaſoning ever lead to error, and as experience is the only ſure guide in political diſcuſſions, let us examine whether the ſubjects of England have been more happy, or have enjoyed more liberty ſince the operation of this influence, or before it exiſted? When James the Firſt's prerogative began to be queſtioned and ſucceſsfully oppoſed, he found it neceſſary to make ſome friends in parliament, by the diſtribution of conſiderable offices

among the members of great power and abilities; and they not continuing to receive their wages as uſual, wiſhed to join honour to profit. The Court and Country parties then were firſt formed, in the Parliament which ſat in the year 1620, and have continued ever ſince; and though they ſeem to threaten its exiſtence, are the real cauſes of its permanent life and vigour. Till this period a ſeat in parliament was ſo little regarded, that many towns, which had neglected their right of returning members, now eagerly claimed that privilege.* The firſt inſtance of the King's uſing any influence in the Houſe of Commons by beſtowing favour, was in the perſon of Sir John Saville, a violent opponent of the court, and he was made comptroller of the houſehold, a privy counſellor, and a baron, in the year 1621. In the year 1630, Sir Thomas Wentworth, afterwards Lord Stafford, † Sir Dudley Digges Heath attorney, and Noy, ſolicitor general, though violent popular leaders, were inveſted with office.

When the Engliſh monarchs were deprived of thoſe powers and prerogatives which they had enjoyed till the Petition of Rights, and before they had any conſiderable influence in Parliament, our conſtitution was in ſubſtance a republic; for, like Poland, it was ſubject to all thoſe factions which attend the workings of ambition and avarice, without that energy which conſtitutes the chief excellence of monarchy; and the councils of the nation were remarkable for turbulence, weakneſs, and inſtability. In the year 1668, Sir William Temple preſſed an offenſive

* Journals, 10th of Feb. 1620.

† He was afterwards brought to the block for illegal exertions of power, and for ſtraining the prerogative too high; which is a ſtrong proof of the frailty and inſtability of man, and how unfit he is for a Republic.

ſive league between England and Holland, in order to oppoſe the aſpiring views of Louis the Fourteenth, who threatened the ſafety of both. But De Witt, the penſionary of Holland, objected to it; becauſe, he ſaid, that ever ſince the reign of Elizabeth, there had been ſuch a fluctuation in the councils of England, that it was not poſſible to take any certain meaſures with that kingdom for three years together.* In Charles the Second's reign, the Prince of Conde uſed frequently to ſay, in irony, to the Engliſh ambaſſador at Paris, "Pray who was your miniſter by the laſt packet†?" King William, though ſaluted, on his arrival in England, with general acclamations, as the ſaviour of our conſtitution, was ſcarce ſeated on his throne, when he found Parliament ſo rent by a ſpirit of party, that he was on the point of abandoning the kingdom, and of returning to Holland. Portland, Sommers, Halifax, and Albemarle, his moſt faithful ſervants, were impeached, though they had been principally concerned in bringing about the revolution; and, what was very inſulting and mortifying to him, he was obliged to diſmiſs his Dutch guards, though ſo few in number, that they could not have been an object of national jealouſy. On the peace of Ryſwick, adminiſtration were ſo weak, that they could obtain a military eſtabliſhment of no more than ten thouſand men, though there was a ſtrong faction in favour of James the Second, and though his cauſe was warmly eſpouſed by Louis the Fourteenth, who maintained

* This is an excellent admonition to thoſe who contend that we ſhould make peace with that horde of aſſaſſins, the French, who cannot have any permanent government whatever.

† Lewis the Fourteenth had numerous friends in the Britiſh Parliament by the means of bribery, during the reigns of Charles the Second and James the Second.

ed a formidable army. In the year 1689, when the rival factions of Whig and Tory were nearly balanced, the kingdom was in a perilous and alarming ſtate; for they, by their ſtrenuous exertions to obtain a majority in the elections, which recurred every three years, kept the kingdom in a ſtate of feveriſh turbulence, baneful to induſtry, to the morals of the people, and to the peace of ſociety; and the King was obliged to embrace that party which had gained the upper hand, by which he was prevented from ſelecting ſuch Miniſters as were diſtinguiſhed by their talents and probity. In the year 1689, the Tories having gained an aſcendancy in Parliament, the King was obliged to employ them, though conſcious that they were inimical to his acceſſion; and even with them, his party not being ſtrong enough to carry on the ordinary buſineſs of the nation, he was under the neceſſity of employing Sir John Trevor to gain an aſcendancy in Parliament by means which muſt have been painful to his generous mind; but he found it abſolutely neceſſary, as Louis the Fourteenth had acquired great influence in the Parliament of England by bribery. The late King of Sweden found himſelf in a worſe ſituation from the ſame cauſe; for there was ſcarce a monarch in Europe that had not procured friends in the Swediſh ſenate through bribery; nay, the Pope had gained a party in it. At laſt the King, finding himſelf tottering on his throne, and being too poor to appeaſe theſe contending factions, by places, penſions, or pecuniary donations, was obliged to extinguiſh them by overturning the conſtitution.

The extreme virulence and rancour of the two factions of Whig and Tory, from the Revolution to the end of George the Firſt's reign, conſtantly convulſing and weakening the government, prove how

how neceſſary the influence of the Crown is. In the impeachment of the four peers, which I have already mentioned, the Commons proceeded in ſo ſeditious and vindictive a manner, that the people took the alarm, and admoniſhed them; and they, dreading popular reſentment, found it neceſſary to become more moderate. At one time, the Lords, by a ſeaſonable oppoſition, checked the Commons in their revengeful career. At another time, the Peers, actuated by ſelfiſh motives, would have deprived the King of his moſt ſalutary and precious prerogative, if the Commons had not rejected the bill for limiting the peerage; though in this the latter were influenced by ſiniſter views. It occurred alſo that the King was, at times, obliged to oppoſe the two Houſes with his negative, when they with united force preſſed forward like a torrent. During this tempeſtuous ſeaſon, we find that the oppoſition, whenever they ejected their rivals from office, regularly purſued the meaſures which they had previouſly condemned; and in the year 1695, one party violated the principles of evidence in a trial for high treaſon, which they themſelves had eſtabliſhed by law but a few months before.

From the Revolution to the end of George the Second's reign, the chief topics of cenſure and crimination againſt the Court party were a ſtanding army, continental connections, and the greatneſs of the ſupply; and yet the Country party uniformly adopted them when they had ſucceeded their adverſaries in office. Lord Bolingbroke, while in adminiſtration, employed the arts of corruption and court influence as much, nay, more than any Miniſter that preceded him. In the year 1711, he recommended to Queen Anne to create twelve new peers at once, to gain an aſcendancy

dancy in the Houſe of Lords, which was reckoned a very dangerous meaſure; and yet in his political diſſertations, dictated by a revengeful party ſpirit, when diſappointed ambition had ſoured his mind, and had converted him into a ſpeculative patriot, he ſeverely condemns that practice, and aſſerts, that by depriving the Crown of the means of bribing, there will be an end of bribery. His aſſertion is ſtrictly true; but, as the hope of obtaining wealth and honors is the main inducement to men of great abilities to enter into the Houſe of Commons, by extinguiſhing it you will reduce that body to the ſtate of torpor and inſignificance in which it was before the reign of James the Firſt, or you will kindle in it that furious turbulence which ever attends a republic. It is not to be ſuppoſed that Miniſters would make uſe of Court influence, which muſt render them odious in the eyes of the nation, unleſs they were driven to the neceſſity of it, and that neceſſity will ever exiſt while man continues to be a creature of intereſt and paſſion. Were man as pure as our firſt parents before their fall, we may expect that he would invariably purſue the dictates of wiſdom and virtue; but when we know that he is a frail creature, and ſubject to the dominion of ſtrong paſſions, which we cannot alter or extinguiſh, it will be abſurd to think of making him conform to an abſtract ſyſtem of polity deviſed by viſionary theoriſts, we muſt be contented to adopt a government ſuitable to his nature. Milton has ſo beautifully deſcribed this in the Twelfth Book of his Paradiſe Loſt, where the Angel repreſents to Adam the moral condition of man, that I am tempted to give it to the reader:

Yet

Yet know withal,
Since thy original lapſe, true liberty
Is loſt, which always with right reaſon dwells,
Twinn'd, and from her hath no dividual being.
Reaſon in man ſubdu'd, or not obey'd,
Immediately inordinate deſires
And upſtart paſſions catch the government
From reaſon, and to ſervitude reduce
Man, till then free.

In the year 1721, the Miniſtry gained a conſiderable influence in Parliament; and from that time the councils of the nation have diſplayed more wiſdom and ſtability than at any former period; and the Britiſh empire has been gradually acquiring a degree of ſtrength, ſplendor, and opulence, which no country of the ſame extent ever attained. Under the benign influence of ſuch a conſtitution, England has been enabled, not only to protect herſelf, but to gain immortal glory, againſt the united powers of America, France, Spain, and Holland, and at this time to prevent the French robbers and aſſaſſins from ſpreading anarchy and deſolation through every part of Europe.

O fortunatos nimium ſua ſi bona norint agricolas!

The actual ſtate of the Engliſh government is this: the Miniſter, with the aid of the Court party, carries on the neceſſary buſineſs of the ſtate, and prevents the popular ſpirit of our conſtitution from overturning it.

Ni faciat, maria ac terras, cœlumque profundum,
Quippe ferant rapidi ſecum verrantque per auras.

On the other hand, the Country party behold with a vigilant eye the proceedings of their antagoniſts, and ring the alarm-bell, whenever they

proceed too far, in extending the prerogative of the Crown, or in ſquandering the public money: and their zeal on this occaſion, though it ultimately redounds to the advantage of the community, ſeldom flows from pure motives of patriotiſm, but from thoſe of avarice and ambition. They are at length rewarded, for rendering thoſe important ſervices to the public, by ſucceeding in their turn to thoſe places of honour and emolument which the Court party had occupied, and no perſons can be better qualified to diſcharge the complicated and laborious functions of government, from their long attention to them. In Madame Pompadour's Memoirs there appears a letter written by an Engliſh Miniſter to Cardinal Fleury, who then guided the helm in France, which throws ſome light on the ſtate of party at that time in England. Sir Robert Walpole and the Cardinal had a mutual good underſtanding with each other, and wiſhed to preſerve their reſpective countries from the calamities of war; but the oppoſition, thinking he had not abilities to carry it on, were very vehement in their endeavours to involve England in hoſtilities with France. In this letter Sir Robert wrote as follows:

"I penſion half the Parliament to keep it quiet; but, as the King's money is inſufficient, they to whom I give none clamour loudly for war. It would be expedient for your Excellence to remit me three millions of livres, to ſilence the barkers. Gold is a metal which corrects all the ill qualities of the blood. A penſion of 2000l. a year will make the moſt tempeſtuous warrior as tame as a lamb."*

No perſon can deny that Lord Chatham had as diſintereſted an attachment to his country as any perſon that ever exiſted, and yet he found court influence

* Lord Chatham's Life.

influence indiſpenſably neceſſary to keep Parliament quiet. In the year 1757 he had the entire formation of a new miniſtry; and he put the Duke of Newcaſtle at the head of it, not from any liking he had for him, or on account of his abilities, but becauſe, as he ſaid openly on a ſubſequent occaſion, that he borrowed his pocket majority *from him* to carry on the public buſineſs; for the Duke's brother, Mr. Pelham, when at the head of the treaſury, had made terms with the Parliament, and had given his pocket majority to the Duke.* The obſervations of the moderate party at the time of the Revolution, are an excellent illuſtration of the remarks which I have made, and of the advantages ariſing from a ſpirit of party, when kept within due bounds. That the revolution having been brought about by a coalition of whigs and tories, the former were obliged to make conceſſions to the latter, and to be contented with the conceſſions which they could get from them in their turn. That political wiſdom is founded more on experience than theory: that all the improvements of the Engliſh conſtitution have ariſen from applying remedies to evils that were felt, and not to thoſe which men thought they foreſaw: that its duration has been owing to the conſtant vibration between the executive and legiſlative powers upon each other, which fixes the attention of the citizens upon the public, as if they were guards ſet on watch, and keeps both powers in awe of each other: and that the firſt calm of unanimity in Great-Britain, will be the laſt ſigh of expiring freedom; that a King who can raiſe neither money nor forces without conſent of Parliament, is under a continued neceſſity of reſorting to it; and that where the declaration

* Lord Chatham's Life.

claration of rights, with all its imperfections, was joined to those constitutional articles which have already been established, the whole records of mankind presented not a system of freedom so complete and so happy.

During twelve years that England tried a republican form of government, she experienced greater misery, and more oppression, than under the most despotic Kings. That many-headed monster underwent no less than eight forms in that short space of time. Arbitrary imprisonment, of which the Parliament were so anxious to deprive Charles I. was exercised so wantonly, without information or any form of law, that all the prisons in England were crowded with persons whom the mere suspicion of the ruling party had regarded as dangerous. The laws against high treason were enlarged and extended to verbal offences, and even to intentions. The sequestration and forfeitures of the estates of the royalists, and the compositions for them, the sale of the crown lands, and those of the deans and chapters, were insufficient to defray the monstrous expense of so irregular a government, and to gratify the Parliament, and the various instruments whom Cromwell employed in every part of the kingdom to maintain his tyranny. At length the people of England, groaning under such a dreadful system of despotism, re-established that constitution which afforded the most perfect security for all social rights; and the following words of Shakespeare might have been aptly applied to them:

> The commonwealth is sick of their own choice,
> Their ever-greedy love hath surfeited.

FINIS.